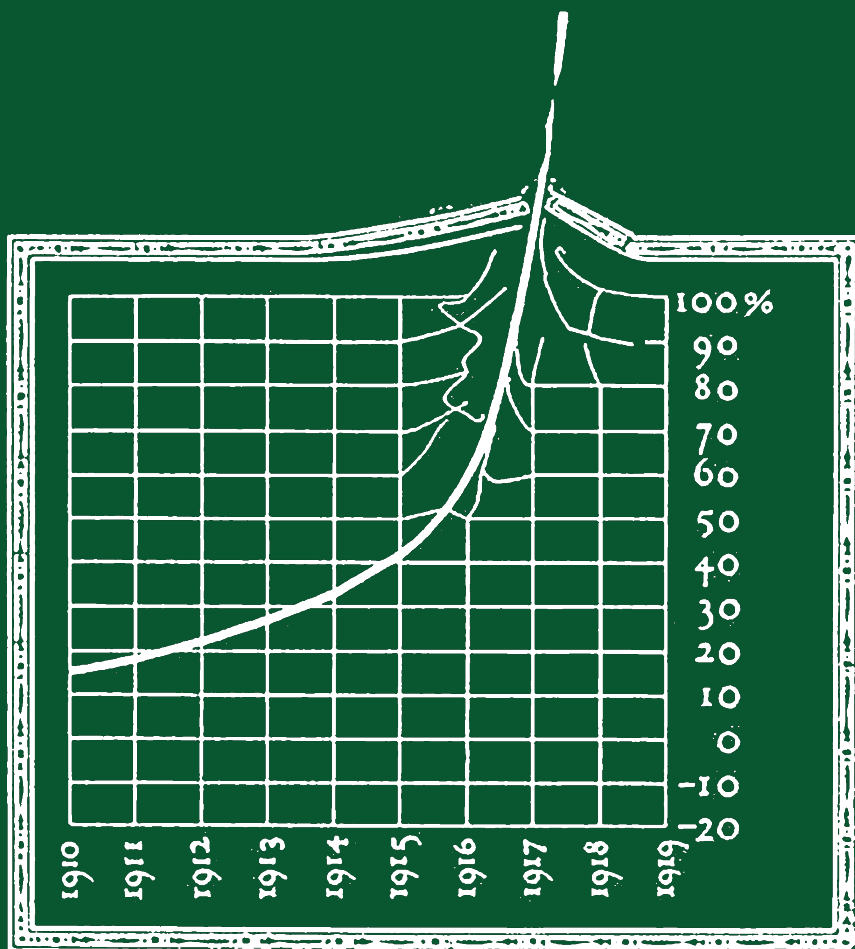


# In the Mood for Objectivity

A Two-Day Seminar on Artefactual Rhetoric  
at DAE Information Design, 2025



— *By targeting this pleasure, the object falls into the realm of aesthetics; by targeting belief, it derives from rhetoric. And by respecting the truth of the thing...*  
— *Or by revealing it...*  
— *The truth of the thing promoted, the graphic object takes on the value of testimony, it belongs to the art of proving, to inquiry, to history, to the establishment of knowledge.*  
— *They [graphic artists] are in fact at once artists, lawyers, witnesses, historians, and judges.*  
— *Why judges?*  
— *Because they interpret. They are also interpreters.*

Jean-François Lyotard

Graphic design in general and information design in particular not only carry informational use-value, but also a rhetorical surplus: an implicit expression of alignment with a specific value system. This system may be moral, technical, political, or otherwise. An infographic does not merely convey data; it also communicates a claim to its own validity. A detailed map is not only about the territory it represents, but also about the authority of its representation. In this sense, artefacts always perform a more or less hidden rhetorical function.

Recent currents in data visualization have moved beyond objectivity, aiming to communicate additional values alongside data: political leanings, affect, intimacy. Data viz has become openly partisan. But this development reveals, in retrospect, that "graphic art" always was. In this seminar, we will examine the rhetorical strategies, both intentional and unconscious, embedded in visual artifacts, in order to outline a theory of artefactual rhetoric and explore its intersections with traditional rhetorical frameworks.

The seminar was run by Silvio Lorusso

#### PARTICIPANTS

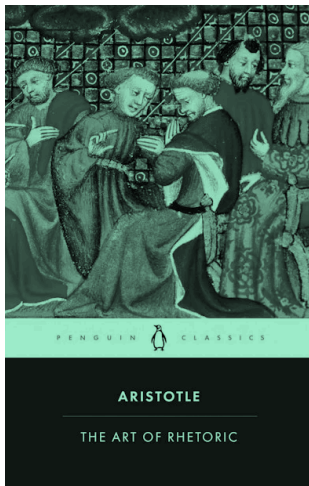
**ARNAR INGI  
CASSANDRE TORNAY  
DIANA YUKARI  
HAOTONG YU  
KOSARA SVETOSLAVOVA KESKINOVA  
LI QIU  
LUCA MARINI  
LUCA WESTE  
LUCAS GEIGER  
MARTINA COSTA BIGNOTTI  
MATTEO FALCONE  
SAMUEL SALMINEN  
SERGIO PINILLA LOPEZ  
ZHIYI LAN**

**MA INFORMATION DESIGN**

*Cover illustration: Altered infographic from An Investigation into the Physical Properties of Books by W. A. Dwiggins and L. B. Siegfried, 1919. Archived by Isabel Overby on the People's Graphic Design Archive (<https://peoplesgdarchive.org/item/19507/w-a-dwiggins-infographic>).*

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# THE ART OF RHETORIC

## 4TH CENTURY BCE

ARISTOTLE

### KEYWORDS

Persuasion  
Public Speaking  
Argument  
Classical Philosophy  
Communication

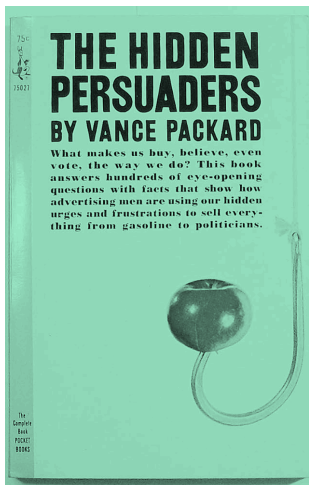
### BIOGRAPHY

ABSTRACT

QUOTE

QUICK  
IMPRESSIONS





## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# THE HIDDEN PERSUADERS 1957

## VANCE PACKARD

Advertising  
Consumer Behavior  
Psychology  
Mass Media  
Influence

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# “RHETORIC OF THE IMAGE” 1964

## ROLAND BARTHES

Symbolic  
Image  
Language  
Anchoring  
Transmitting

Roland Gérard Barthes (12 November 1915 – 25 March 1980) was a French literary theorist, essayist, philosopher, critic, and semiotician. His work engaged in the analysis of a variety of sign systems, mainly derived from Western popular culture. His ideas explored a diverse range of fields and influenced the development of multiple schools of theory, including structuralism, anthropology, literary theory, and post-structuralism.

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

Roland Barthes explores the semiotics of images, asking how meaning is produced and communicated beyond verbal language. Barthes situates the problem in the tension between analogical representation (the photographic or pictorial “copy”) and linguistic codes. To investigate, he focuses on advertising, where the intentionality of messages guarantees the presence of signification. By analyzing the interplay of denotation, connotation, and linguistic anchorage, Barthes establishes a foundational semiotic framework for understanding visual communication, influencing subsequent studies in media, advertising, and cultural theory.

“It can thus be seen that in the total system of the image the structural functions are polarized: on the one hand there is a sort of paradigmatic condensation at the level of the connotators (that is, broadly speaking, of the symbols), which are strong signs, scattered, 'reified'; on the other a syntagmatic 'flow' at the level of the denotation-it will not be forgotten that the syntagm is always very close to speech, and it is indeed the iconic 'discourse' which naturalizes its symbols.”

*The article mentions that the functions of language information include anchoring and transmitting, that is, guiding people's interpretation of a certain image or symbol through language. This is in line with the general view of the relativity and uncertainty of symbols in semantics. Language is not merely a description, but it guides us on how to understand and interpret the content indicated by symbols. For instance, the language in advertisements helps us identify the correct level of perception, avoiding misunderstandings or over-projection. In Coleman's theory, the relationship between language and images (symbols) is of great significance because language helps us understand, define, and construct reality. Through language, we can not only convey information but also control the way it is received.*



# “VISUAL/VERBAL RHETORIC”

## 1965

GUI BONSIPEPE

### KEYWORDS

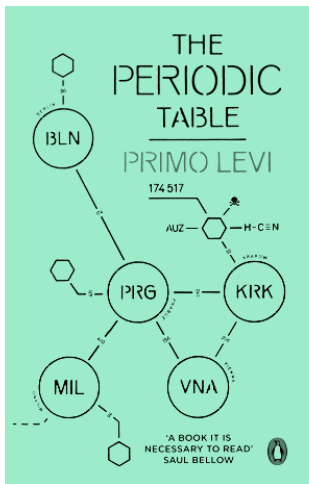
Design  
Rhetoric  
Communication  
Visual Language  
Semiotics

### BIOGRAPHY

ABSTRACT

QUOTE

QUICK  
IMPRESSIONS



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# THE PERIODIC TABLE 1975

## PRIMO LEVI

Chemistry  
Memory  
Survival  
Autobiography  
Holocaust

Educated at the Massimo d’Azeglio high school, he graduated in chemistry in 1941 despite the racial laws, and worked in laboratories and industry. Arrested in 1943, he was deported to Auschwitz in 1944 and liberated in 1945. Back in Turin, he recounted the experience in *If This Is a Man* (1947). With works such as *The Truce*, *The Periodic Table*, *The Wrench*, and *The Drowned and the Saved*, he reflected on memory, science, and the human condition. He is regarded as one of the clearest and most universal voices of the twentieth century.

## ABSTRACT

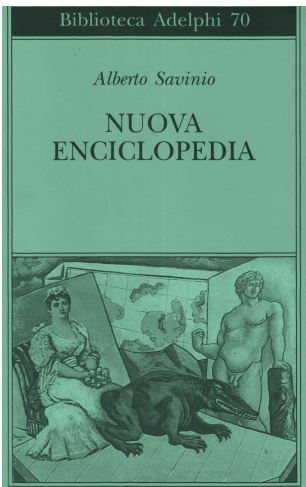
## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

The *Periodic Table* is the fifth book published by Primo Levi. It is a collection of short stories, released in 1975. The work brings together 21 stories, each titled after an element of the periodic table, to which it is in some way connected. The themes are varied, centered on Levi’s professional life as a chemist and framed within an autobiographical context. From his early experiments to his first jobs, from life in the Nazi camps to tales, whether real or imagined, linked to the craft of chemistry: the author’s life is portrayed through the kaleidoscope of chemistry.

“No, P’s chemistry was not the motor-force of the Universe, nor the key to the Truth: P was a skeptical, ironic old man, the enemy of all forms of rhetoric (for this reason, and only for this, he was an anti-Fascist), intelligent, obstinate, and quick-witted with a sad sort of wit.’ ‘Not only those humble exercises of ours but physics as a whole was marginal, by its nature, by vocation, insofar as it set itself the task of regulating the universe of appearances, whereas the truth, the reality, the intimate essence of things and man exist elsewhere, hidden behind a veil, or even veils (I don’t remember exactly). He was a physicist, more precisely an astrophysicist, diligent and eager but without illusions: the Truth lay beyond, inaccessible to our telescopes, accessible to the initiates. This was a long road which he was traveling with effort, wonderment, and profound joy. Physics was prose: elegant gymnastics for the mind, mirror of Creation, the key to man’s dominion over the planet; but what is the stature of Creation, of man and the planet?”

*In The Periodic Table, Primo Levi reflects on his career and education as a chemist, offering an insightful meditation on the role of practice as a way of analyzing the world. Chemistry and physics are often regarded as disciplines of study, reflection, and discovery that claim to provide objective truths for understanding reality. This rhetoric, however, is challenged by Levi, who sees these sciences as indeed objective practices, but ones that remain limited to making sense only of the appearances that surround us. Truth cannot be revealed through a single lens, but rather through the convergence of multiple perspectives, especially when truth lacks contact with lived reality. This critique can, of course, be extended to every field of inquiry. Even design, though it often brings together different disciplines for analyzing the world, fails to reveal the truth and demonstrates instead the necessity of engaging with multiple practices.*



## “RETTORICA”

1977

ALBERTO SAVINIO

### KEYWORDS

Rhetoric  
Literature  
Satire  
Modernism  
Philosophy Poetics

### BIOGRAPHY

Alberto Savinio (1891–1952) was an Italian writer, painter, playwright, and composer. Savinio was an interdisciplinary figure and a key voice in early 20th-century Italian modernism. His work spans surrealism, metaphysics, and mythological reinterpretation, often blending irony, philosophy, and absurdity. He was deeply influenced by classical antiquity, psychoanalysis, and avant-garde aesthetics. Throughout his life, he refused rigid definitions and his writing often plays with genre, tone, and form in inventive and provocative ways.

### ABSTRACT

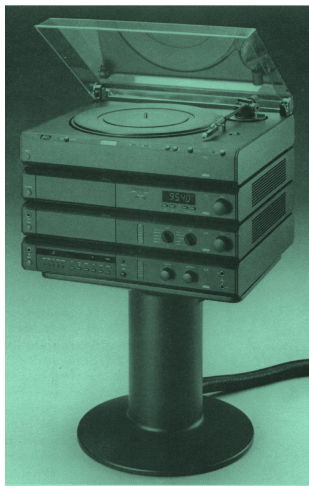
Nuova Enciclopedia (New Encyclopedia) is one of Savinio’s most intriguing and unconventional works. Despite the title, it’s not a traditional encyclopedia, but rather, a fragmented, subjective, and literary collection of entries on various topics. Ranging from historical figures and mythological beings to abstract concepts like love, boredom, rhetoric, and modernity. Written between 1941 and 1942 but published posthumously in 1977, the Nuova Enciclopedia reflects Savinio’s belief that knowledge should not be rigid, totalizing, or overly rational. Instead, he offers a kind of “anti-encyclopedia”, mixing fiction, personal observation, irony, and cultural criticism in short, witty, sometimes surreal entries. Each entry is a window into Savinio’s personal philosophy, where meaning is ambiguous, fluid, and poetic, and where the boundaries between disciplines are constantly blurred.

### QUOTE

“E quelli da cinquecento di un rosa appena acceso di rosso, rosso, che molto opportunamente per la stagione richiama al gelato di fragola.  
(La mia macchina da scrivere aveva scritto « fregola» e a me toccò registrare la variante, perché mi sono prefisso di raccogliere tutti i lapsus della mia macchina, in vista di un esame psicanalitico che sto preparando delle macchine da scrivere).”

### QUICK IMPRESSIONS

*A particular reflection on Rhetoric with the Nuova Enciclopedia: after a first introduction telling strawberry stories with gigantic banknotes and other exaggerated subjective situations of daily life, the Nuova Enciclopedia follows with a definition of rhetoric. Rhetoric is the disproportion between appearance and reality, between what is presented and what is. Emphasizing the imbalance caused by the hypertrophy of appearance. I believe this to be particularly relevant for this collective publication and its reflections, where sometimes, in our 'teste', meanings and words end up intertwined and squeezed in a cloud of blurriness. Read it carefully.*



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# “DECLARATION DESIGN: RHETORIC ARGUMENT AND DEMONSTRATION IN DESIGN PRACTICE”

1985

RICHARD BUCHANAN

Design Practice  
Rhetoric  
Argumentation  
Communication  
Theory

Richard Buchanan, PhD, is well known for extending the application of design into new areas of theory and practice, writing, and teaching as well as practicing the concepts and methods of interaction design. He argues that interaction design does not stop at the flatland of the computer screen but extends into the personal and social life of human beings and into the emerging area of service design, as well as into organizational and management design.

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

This essay posits that design is a rhetorical art of persuasion. This framework is presented as a necessary tool to address contemporary challenges, namely the growing separation between technology and design and the confusing diversity of postmodern products. The text redefines technology not as an applied science, but as a persuasive art concerned with probable, rather than necessary, solutions to practical problems. Design arguments are composed of three elements adapted from classical rhetoric: technological reasoning (logos), which blends mechanical principles with human values; character (ethos), which conveys credibility to persuade users; and emotion (pathos), which puts the user in a receptive and desirable frame of mind. The essay concludes that these arguments function as a form of demonstrative rhetoric—they exist in the present as "declarations" that assert their own value and fitness for use.

“Unlike words, which can persuade people to specific judgments about the past or future and assert attitudes, ideas, and values that are recognized in the present, designed objects primarily assert their own existence and, through that existence, the attitudes that are an integral part of an object's present being.”



Fig. 1)

#### KEYWORDS

#### BIOGRAPHY

## “READING ISOTYPE” 1986

ELLEN LUPTON

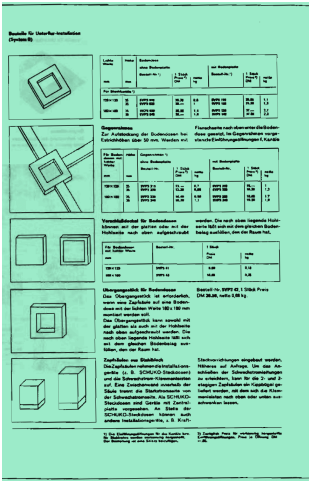
Isotype  
Graphic Design  
Information Design  
Visual Language  
Typography

#### ABSTRACT

#### QUOTE

#### QUICK IMPRESSIONS





KEYWORDS

BIOGRAPHY

“THE RHETORIC OF NEUTRALITY”  
1989

ROBIN KINROSS

Interlarding  
Neutrality  
Modernism  
Typography  
Ideology

Robin Kinross (born 1949) is an author and publisher on the topic of visual communication and typography. His most significant work is Modern Typography. He is a proprietor of Hyphen Press, which publishes books on design and typography. Kinross started Hyphen Press in 1980. Modern Typography was published in 1992. Since the 1990s, Hyphen produces about "two to four publications a year".

ABSTRACT

QUOTE

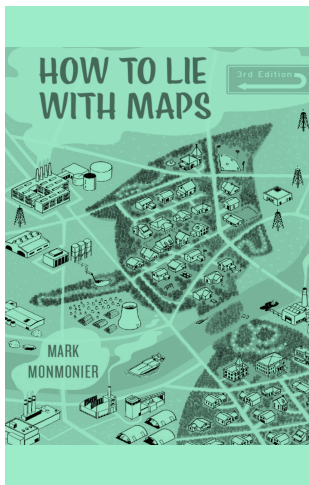
QUICK  
IMPRESSIONS

The Rhetoric of Neutrality challenges the idea that information design can ever be free of persuasion. Through a historical study of twentieth-century British and Dutch railway timetables, it shows how typography, layout, symbols, and colour operate as rhetorical devices. Typeface choice emerges as especially revealing: the shift from nineteenth-century styles to Gill Sans in the 1920s—promoted as “stripped for action”—and later to the systematic Univers reflects changing beliefs about science, technology, and design. These typographic shifts mirror the fate of modernism itself: from the utopian interwar faith in science and technology to its post-war reconfiguration under information theory, institutionalised at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm, which sought a systematic, scientific foundation for design.

“[T]he sense one has' of [the design of national railway timetables] is a consequence of the rhetorical devices they employ. All these examples impart information [...] through the means of typography: typeface, type style, rules, dotleaders, symbols, spaces, and color. And these means constitute an 'interlarding\*' (to use Bonsiepe's word) of information, and this interlarding provides the data of cultural reference. \*To scatter thickly in or between; intersperse.”

*Kinross argues that even something as seemingly boring as a train timetable is trying to persuade you of something. The author's whole argument is that there's no such thing as "neutral" design. Every choice—the layout, the symbols, and especially the typeface—is a rhetorical device. Using old railway timetables from the 1920s to the 70s and the shift from old-fashioned fonts to 'clean' ones as a case study, Kinross connects this entire design shift to the bigger history of modernism in the 20th century. It shows how the ideals of modernism—all about science, rationality, and efficiency—took hold, especially after WWII at HfG Ulm.*





## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# HOW TO LIE WITH MAPS 1991

MARK MONMONIER

Cartography  
Manipulation  
Disinformation  
Data Maps  
Graphics

Mark Monmonier, Ph.D., is a Distinguished Professor of Geography at Syracuse University's Maxwell School. An expert in cartography, GIS, toponymy, and the history of twentieth-century mapping, he has authored over twenty books on the power of maps in politics, journalism, administration, and environmental science. His best-known works include *How to Lie with Maps*, *Air Apparent*, *Bushmanders and Bullwinkles*, and *Spying with Maps*. He also wrote the first textbook on computer-assisted cartography (*Computer-assisted Cartography: Principles and Prospects*) and created the influential "Monmonier Algorithm," widely applied in linguistics and genetics. Beyond writing, he has served as editor of *The American Cartographer*, president of the American Cartographic Association, and advisor to national research and environmental agencies.

## ABSTRACT

Mark Monmonier's "How to Lie with Maps" is a landmark work in cartography that uncovers how maps, far from being neutral representations, are shaped by choices, simplifications, and biases that influence how we perceive space and place. First published in 1991 and written for a broad audience, the book illustrates how maps can be selectively designed, distorted, or manipulated to serve political agendas, commercial interests, or persuasive narratives. By emphasizing the subjectivity and power of cartographic representation, Monmonier encourages readers to approach maps with critical awareness rather than unquestioned trust. In its updated editions, the book extends its critique to the digital age, showing how modern technologies create new opportunities for both innovation and deception. With wit, clarity, and accessible examples, "How to Lie with Maps" remains an essential text for understanding the interplay between geography, technology, and the politics of representation, while fostering a healthy skepticism toward the maps we encounter every day.

## QUOTE

"White lies are an essential element of cartographic language, an abstraction that is enormously useful for analysis and communication. Like verbal language and mathematics, though, cartographic abstraction has costs as well as benefits. If not harnessed by someone who is knowledgeable and with honest intent, the power of maps can get out of control."

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

*The book is an easy and engaging read that helps build a more informed and critical use of maps. It challenges the idea that maps are purely objective reflections of reality, reminding us that they always involve choices, simplifications, and "white lies." These small distortions can become manipulative when used deliberately, and even well-intentioned mapmakers can mislead if they don't fully understand generalization or graphic principles. What stood out to me is how maps act as rhetorical tools—able to persuade, influence, or even deceive, while most people accept them without question. With today's technology, almost anyone can create maps, sometimes producing misleading results unintentionally. The book also highlights how the boundary between mapmakers and map users is disappearing, making its insights especially relevant in the digital age.*



KEYWORDS

BIOGRAPHY

# “UR-FASCISM” 1995

## UMBERTO ECO

Fascism  
Politics  
History  
Ideology  
Culture

Umberto Eco (1932 – 2016) was an Italian novelist and philosopher. He's known for several pieces of literature including his novel 'The Name of the Rose', a historical mystery combining semiotics in fiction with biblical analysis, medieval studies and literary theory; recurrent thematics in his work.

## ABSTRACT

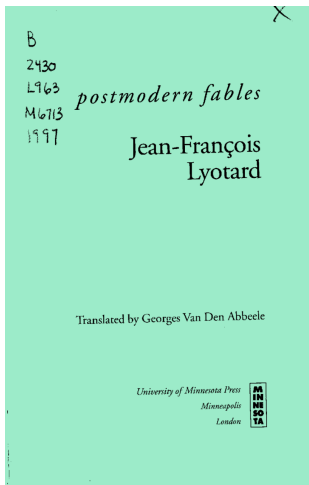
## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

Ur-fascism' is an essay authored by Italian philosopher, novelist, and semiotician Umberto Eco. First published in 1995, this influential essay provides an analysis of fascism with it's definition, and discusses it's fundamental characteristics and traits. Drawing on Eco's personal experiences growing up in Mussolini's Italy and his extensive research on fascist movements, the essay offers his insights into the nature of fascism and it's manifestations.

“Fascism became an all-purpose term because one can eliminate from a fascist regime one or more features, and it will still be recognizable as fascist. [...] But in spite of this fuzziness, I think it is possible to outline a list of features that are typical of what I would like to call Ur-Fascism, or Eternal Fascism.”

*Umberto Eco highlights the universal and recurring use of the term “fascism” and its reappearance across both past and contemporary contexts. It exists in, with, and despite its many contradictions. Precisely because of its fluid and adaptable nature, it is relevant to dive into its definition. By claiming the urgencies to recognize it when encountered in a new shape, form or 'innocent disguise' he stresses that we must 'uncover it' and unambiguously 'point our finger at any of its new instances'. This call to recognition is not simply political, but also rhetorical. Fascism, in Eco’s view, persuades, seduces, and blends into dominant narratives. He insists that the act of naming and denouncing fascism is not a rhetorical excess, but a necessary ethical gesture.*



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# “PARADOX ON THE GRAPHIC ARTIST” 1997

## JEAN FRANÇOIS LYOTARD

Graphic Arts  
Popular Arts  
Communication  
Critical Theory  
Aesthetic & Politics

Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) was a French philosopher, sociologist, and literary theorist. His work revolves around topics such as epistemology and communication, the human body, modern and postmodern art, literature and critical theory, as well as the relationship between aesthetics and politics. He engages with aesthetic issues in a way that seeks to break with the Hegelian perspective, in which art must think of itself as a materialization of the mind. He defines aesthetics as “a tool to expose often unseen tensions, shifts, and complications in philosophical thinking and its relations with society.”

## ABSTRACT

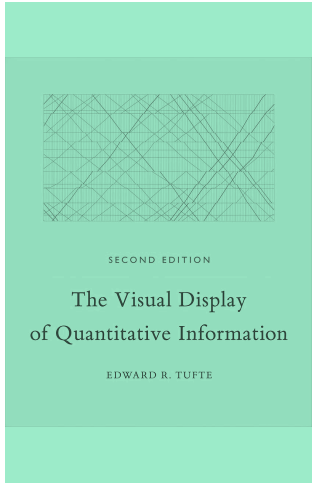
The chapter “Paradox on the Graphic Artist” by Jean-François Lyotard, in his publication *Postmodern Fables*, examines the figure of the graphic artist and the extreme constraints they face by having to simultaneously fulfill three heterogeneous demands: aesthetic pleasure, rhetorical persuasion, and testimonial fidelity to the promoted “thing.” The graphic artist acts as a complex interpreter, functioning as an artist, lawyer, witness, historian, and judge. The resulting graphic object, then, must be intriguing in order to capture the gaze of the overwhelmed, temporary public. Graphic art is considered a subordinate or “applied” art, yet the paradox—that the artist must achieve faithfulness through inventive interpretation and self-effacement—reveals a core truth about contemporary art.

## QUOTE

“We don’t in-form, we reassure: oh yeah, that’s just what I thought.  
The opposite of intriguing. We’re starting to get bored. We dream of being upset. We wait for an event.  
[...]  
You may bore when you thought to move, you imagine yourself cynical and turn out to be authentic.  
[...]  
And graphic artists cannot make a living without making hypotheses about the public. This is not a civilization nor even a culture, in the anthropological sense. This is the combination, endlessly unmade and remade, of temporary sensibilities...”

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

*The graphic artist as an intriguing figure; somebody is cornered and must navigate, construct and deconstruct a complex constellation of thoughts, timelines, realities, opinions, etc. Ephemeral is ruling; they speculate, try to catch us in a sparkly gaze with intuition, boring in the rhetoric of the public opinion; addressing, mirroring contemporary times.*



# THE VISUAL DISPLAY OF QUANTITATIVE INFORMATION 2001

EDWARD TUFTE

## KEYWORDS

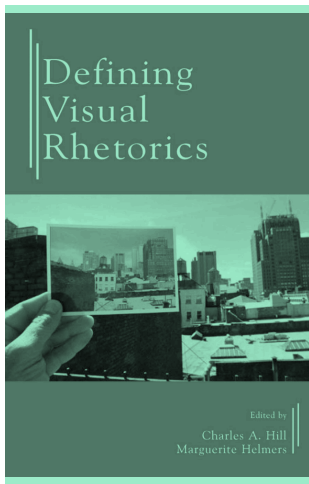
Data Visualization  
Statistics  
Design  
Clarity  
Information Graphics

## BIOGRAPHY

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# DEFINING VISUAL RHETORICS 2004

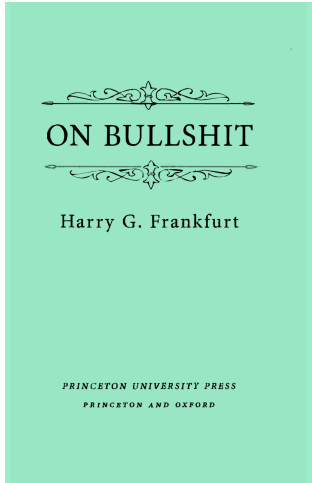
CHARLES HILL & MARGUERITE  
HELMERS (EDS.)

Visual Rhetoric  
Communication  
Persuasion  
Media  
Culture

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS



KEYWORDS

BIOGRAPHY

ON BULLSHIT  
2005

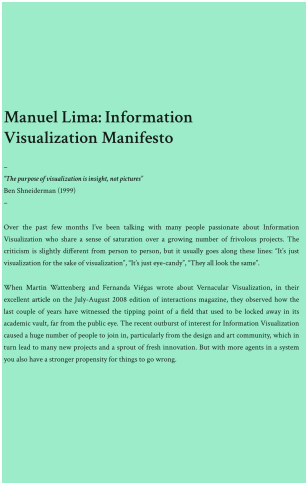
HARRY FRANKFURT

Philosophy  
Truth  
Deception  
Language  
Ethics

ABSTRACT

QUOTE

QUICK  
IMPRESSIONS



## Manuel Lima: Information Visualization Manifesto

"The purpose of visualization is insight, not pictures"  
Ben Shneiderman (1999)

Over the past few months I've been talking with many people passionate about Information Visualization who share a sense of saturation over a growing number of frivolous projects. The criticism is slightly different from person to person, but it usually goes along these lines: "It's just visualization for the sake of visualization", "It's just eye-candy", "They all look the same".

When Martin Wattenberg and Fernanda Viégas wrote about Vernacular Visualization, in their excellent article on the July/August 2008 edition of Interactions magazine, they observed how the last couple of years have witnessed the tipping point of a field that used to be locked away in its academic vault, far from the public eye. The recent outburst of interest for Information Visualization caused a huge number of people to join in, particularly from the design and art community, which in turn lead to many new projects and a sprout of fresh innovation. But with more agents in a system you also have a stronger propensity for things to go wrong.

## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# “INFORMATION VISUALIZATION MANIFESTO” 2009

## MANUEL LIMA

Manifesto  
Information Visualization  
Information Art  
Eye-Candy

Manuel Lima is a portuguese designer, author, and lecturer known for his pioneering work in information visualization and visual culture. He is the founder of VisualComplexity.com, a leading resource on network visualization, and has held design leadership roles at companies such as Nokia, Microsoft, Codecademy, and Google. He is the author of acclaimed books including Visual Complexity: Mapping Patterns of Information (2011), The Book of Trees (2014), and The Book of Circles (2017).

## ABSTRACT

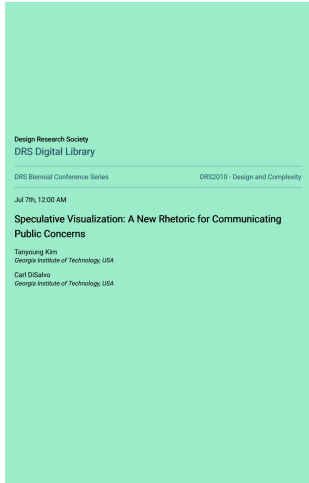
## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

"Information Visualization Manifesto" advocates for purposeful design over aesthetic indulgence. Manuel Lima establishes ten principles to distinguish "information visualization" from what he terms "information art." His central thesis follows Ben Shneiderman's assertion that "the purpose of visualization is insight, not pictures." At its core, Lima's principles emphasize function over form and stress the importance of transparency through source citation, narrative coherence, and the primacy of interactivity in enabling data exploration. The manifesto also warns against gratuitous visualizations that add noise rather than clarity.

“Some will consider this insightful and try to follow these principles in their work. Others will still want to pursue their own flamboyant experiments and not abide to any of this. But in case the last option is chosen, the resulting outcome should start being categorized in a different way. And there are many designations that can easily encompass those projects, such as New Media Art, Computer Art, Algorithmic Art, or my favorite and recommended term: Information Art.”

*While Lima's manifesto offers valuable guidance, it presents a somewhat rigid framework for a field characterized by considerable nuance and complexity. The binary distinction between "information visualization" and "information art" oversimplifies the spectrum of visualization work. Some principles reflect the technological limitations of their time rather than fundamental truths about effective visualization. Other guidelines, such as citing sources, represent standard academic and journalistic practices rather than revolutionary insights. Nevertheless, Lima's manifesto served an important purpose in 2009, providing much-needed direction during a formative period of information design.*



KEYWORDS

Speculative Design  
Visualization  
Public Concerns  
Rhetoric  
Participation

BIOGRAPHY

Kim is a Ph.D. student in Digital Media in the School of Literature, Communication and Culture at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Her research interest is design of persuasive digital media for citizen engagement. She holds M.S. and B.S in industrial design from KAIST.

Carl DiSalvo is an Assistant Professor of Digital Media in the School of Literature, Communication and Culture at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia, where he directs The Public Design Workshop. He earned a PhD in Design from Carnegie Mellon University in 2006 and was a visiting fellow in The Studio for Creative Inquiry and The Center for the Arts in Society from 2006-2007.

ABSTRACT

Speculative design is an emerging rhetorical strategy in design practices and research to raise public awareness in social agendas. In this realm, we propose speculative visualization that aims to achieve speculative design by utilizing techniques from data visualization and graphic design to represent socially and politically meaningful data in aesthetic ways to provoke viewers’ interpretation and further elicit discussions. In this paper, we report the diverse approaches of speculative visualization by demonstrating three exemplary studies and identifying their visual rhetoric. We discuss research opportunities that speculative visualization can broaden its design sphere: the aesthetic adaptation of data visualization techniques, the methodologies of assessment, and the public’s engagement in design activities

QUOTE

“Visualization is what makes data accessible, intelligible, and interesting. When data visualization and graphic design meet together, each actively fills its absent traits with the advantages of the other; graphic design strengthens its arguments with objective and real data, while data visualization empathizes visual aesthetics adopting the principles of graphic design.”

QUICK IMPRESSIONS

*As a testament to its publishing time in 2010, this paper wants to draw attention to the then emerging category of speculative design and the use of "real" data in combination with graphic design and an artistic approach to evoke a stronger emotional response. While probably a pioneering paper, in hindsight a lack of critical questioning the emotional "manipulation" of the viewer becomes obvious. Furthermore, the chosen case studies are not proven through the proposed methodologies, but added as examples without inquiry. Therefore the paper does not stand the test of the time and can not be considered a helpful research tool.*





KEYWORDS

BIOGRAPHY

IL PARLAR FIGURATO  
2010

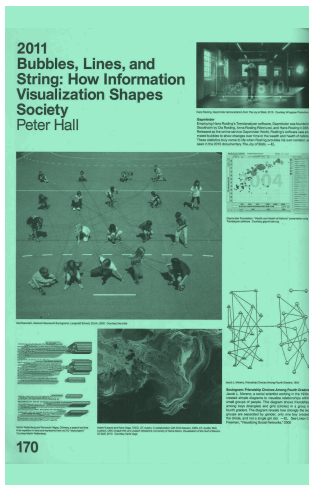
BICE MORTARA GARAVELLI

Rhetoric  
Figurative Language  
Metaphor  
Communication  
Italian Literature

ABSTRACT

QUOTE

QUICK  
IMPRESSIONS



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# “BUBBLES, LINES, AND STRING: HOW INFORMATION VISUALIZATION SHAPES SOCIETY”

2011

PETER HALL

Information Visualization  
Society  
Design  
Communication  
Culture

ABSTRACT

QUOTE

QUICK  
IMPRESSIONS



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# “THE AESTHETICS OF INFORMATION VISUALIZATION” 2011

WARREN SACK

Information Visualization  
Aesthetics  
Anti-Sublime  
Bureaucracy  
Governance

Warren Sack is a media theorist, software designer, and artist whose work examines theories and designs for online public space and public discussion. He is Professor of Film + Digital Media at UC Santa Cruz, where he has chaired the department, directed graduate studies, and led the Digital Arts & New Media MFA program. His artwork has been exhibited at SFMoMA, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the New Museum, the Walker Art Center, and ZKM. He holds a PhD from the MIT Media Lab and a BA from Yale, and is the author of *The Software Arts* (MIT Press).

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

This article formulates an aesthetics of information visualization. The central thesis calls for shifting critical focus of information visualization from visual aesthetics terms (anti-sublime, sublime, uncanny) to its social and political implications. This requires understanding of artistic visualization through conceptual art guidelines and the "aesthetic of administration" or bureaucracy, noting that computers are an outgrowth of bureaucratic techniques. The proposed framework is an aesthetics of governance, which demands asking: What sorts of governance—democratic or bureaucratic—does the visualization support or reflect? This concerns the representation of the collective "body politic", where democratic aesthetics must achieve a rhizomatic topology to facilitate self-governance.

“My argument in a nutshell is this: when you look at artistic projects that map out and visualize information, do not worry so much about whether they are pretty, beautiful, friendly or easy to use. Instead interrogate them by asking what sorts of governance they support or reflect: Are they democratic or bureaucratic? In short, I ask that we shift our attention away from visual aesthetics and focus, instead, on an aesthetics of governance.”

*A compelling critical turn is introduced in how we evaluate artistic information visualizations. Instead of judging them mainly by surface-level aesthetics—such as beauty, novelty, or the “anti-sublime”—we should examine their aesthetics of governance. This means asking whether a visualization strengthens bureaucratic control and surveillance, or whether it opens space for more horizontal, democratic forms of self-representation and collective understanding.*

# “DRAWING THINGS TOGETHER”

## 2012

« Visualisation and Cognition:  
Drawing Things Together »

Bruno Latour  
in H. Kuchlik (editor) **Knowledge and Society**  
Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and  
Present, *Jan Press* vol. 6, pp. 1-40

I. Thinking with eyes and hands

It would be nice to be able to define what is specific to our modern scientific culture. It would be still nicer to find the most economical explanation (which might not be the most economic one) of its origin and special characteristics. To arrive at a parsimonious explanation (it is here we are applied to universal rules of nature. Dependence about changes in the mind or human consciousness, in the movement of the limits, in social relations, in "possibilities", or in the economic differences) which are pointed to explain the emergence of science or its present achievements are simply too paradoxical, not to say biographic in most cases and diabolic cases in more than a few others. Science's career should not these explanations alone. No "new man" suddenly emerged sometime in the sixteenth century, and there are no mutants with larger brains, working inside modern laboratories who can think differently from the rest of us. The idea that a revolutionary mind or a more convincing scientific method emerged from darkened chaos is too complicated a hypothesis.

### BRUNO LATOUR

Science  
Visualization  
Knowledge  
Networks  
Sociology

KEYWORDS

BIOGRAPHY

ABSTRACT

QUOTE

QUICK  
IMPRESSIONS



KEYWORDS

BIOGRAPHY

# “CRITICAL INFOVIS: EXPLORING THE POLITICS OF VISUALIZATION”

## 2013

MARIAN DÖRK, CHRISTOPHER COLLINS, PATRICK FENG & SHEELAGH CARPENDALE

Information Visualization  
Analysis  
Critical Theory  
Values  
Objectivity

Marian Dörk – Researcher at Newcastle University’s Culture Lab • Christopher Collins – Associate Professor at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology • Patrick Feng – Scholar in Communication and Culture at the University of Calgary • Sheelagh Carpendale – Professor of Computer Science at the University of Calgary

ABSTRACT

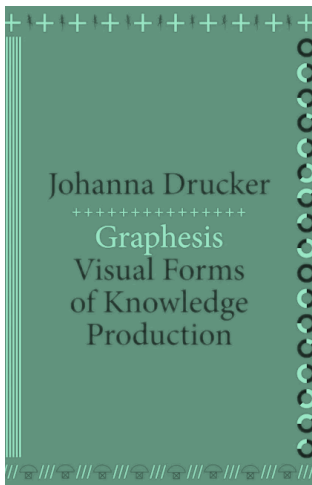
QUOTE

QUICK IMPRESSIONS

As information visualization is increasingly used to raise awareness about social issues, difficult questions arise about the power of visualization. So far the research community has not given sufficient thought to how values and assumptions pervade information visualization. Taking engaging visualizations as a starting point, we outline a critical approach that promotes disclosure, plurality, contingency, and empowerment. Based on this approach, we pose some challenges and opportunities for visualization researchers and practitioners.

“Artistic uses of visualization have grown with the increasing availability of accessible graphics tools and open datasets. Unlike scientists’ aspiration to find universal truths, artists have no illusion that the visualizations they create are neutral or universally true. [...] We propose a critical approach to information visualization that promotes four key principles: disclosure, plurality, contingency, and empowerment. These principles synthesize values from critical approaches in related fields and recent visualization developments. Rather than being definitive, they serve as a starting point for exploring power dynamics in visualization.”

*While the authors remain somewhat pedantic—and arguably naïve—in their adherence to the ideal of a neutral and ostensibly objective design stance, particularly evident in their treatment of casual, vernacular, and artistic uses of visualization, the article nonetheless articulates a compelling critical framework for engaging with the epistemic and rhetorical dimensions of data visualization. This framework is organized around four standpoints—disclosure, plurality, contingency, and empowerment—which operate less as a normative checklist for evaluation than as a set of generative orientations. These orientations invite designers and scholars alike to interrogate the entanglements of data and representation, the situated contexts of production and use, and the asymmetrical relations between designer and viewer.*



# GRAPHESIS: VISUAL FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION 2014

JOHANNA DRUCKER

## KEYWORDS

Visualization  
Knowledge  
Design  
Interpretation  
Digital Humanities

## BIOGRAPHY

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# DEAR DATA 2016

GIORGIA LUPI & STEFANIE  
POSAVEC

Data Visualization  
Personal Stories  
Design  
Communication  
Everyday Life

ABSTRACT

QUOTE

QUICK  
IMPRESSIONS



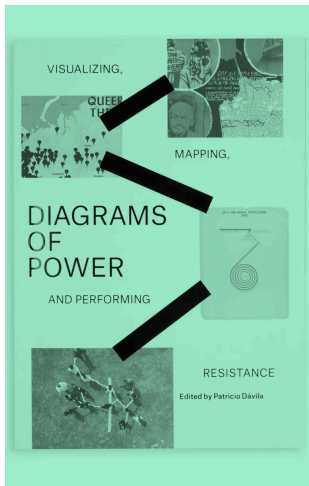
GIORGIA LUPI

Data Visualization  
Humanism  
Design  
Interpretation  
Storytelling

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

54





# DIAGRAMS OF POWER 2019

PATRICIO DÁVILA

## KEYWORDS

Data Visualization  
Power  
Politics  
Design  
Activism

## BIOGRAPHY

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# READING IMAGES: THE GRAMMAR OF VISUAL DESIGN 2020

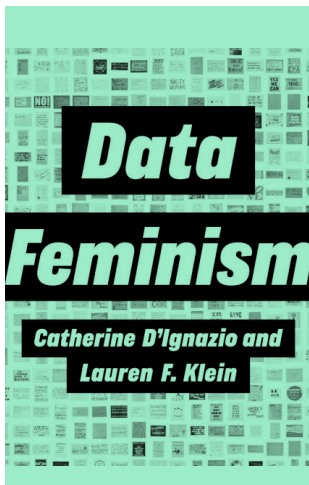
GUNTHER KRESS & THEO VAN  
LEEUWEN

Visual Communication  
Semiotics  
Design  
Multimodality  
Representation

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS



#### KEYWORDS

#### BIOGRAPHY

## DATA FEMINISM 2020

### CATHERINE D'IGNAZIO & LAUREN KLEIN

Data Science  
Big Data  
Intersectional Feminism  
Data Ethics  
Techno-Resistance

Catherine D'Ignazio is a hacker, scholar, and artist/designer whose work centers on feminist technology, data justice, and civic engagement. She has organized women's health hackathons, built news and data visualization systems, and created interactive art addressing issues like water quality and climate change. She is an Associate Professor of Urban Science and Planning at MIT and directs the Data + Feminism Lab.

Lauren Klein is Winship Distinguished Research Professor and Associate Professor of Data & Decision Sciences and English at Emory University, where she directs the Emory Digital Humanities Lab and leads the Mellon-funded Atlanta Interdisciplinary AI Network. Her research combines computational and critical approaches to examine issues of gender, race, and justice.

#### ABSTRACT

#### QUOTE

#### QUICK IMPRESSIONS

Today, data science is a form of power. It has been used to expose injustice, improve health outcomes, and topple governments. But it has also been used to discriminate, police, and surveil. This potential for good, on the one hand, and harm, on the other, makes it essential to ask: Data science by whom? Data science for whom? Data science with whose interests in mind? The narratives around big data and data science are overwhelmingly white, male, and techno-heroic. In *Data Feminism*, Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein present a new way of thinking about data science and data ethics—one that is informed by intersectional feminist thought.

"It is your responsibility to connect the research question to the results and to the audience's interpretation of the results. Letting the numbers speak for themselves is emphatically not more ethical or democratic because it often leads to those numbers being misinterpreted or the results of the study being lost"



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# “VISACTIVISM: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL TO IDENTIFY INFORMATION VISUALIZATION AS AN EXPRESSION OF DESIGN ACTIVISM”

2023

PEDRO DUARTE DE ALMEIDA

Information Visualization  
Design Activism  
Rhetoric  
Society  
Communication

ABSTRACT

QUOTE

QUICK  
IMPRESSIONS



#### KEYWORDS

#### BIOGRAPHY

## THE NEW DESIGNER 2023

### MANUEL LIMA

Design  
Ethics  
Psychology  
Education  
Survival

Manuel Lima is a portuguese designer, author, and lecturer known for his pioneering work in information visualization and visual culture. He is the founder of VisualComplexity.com, a leading resource on network visualization, and has held design leadership roles at companies such as Nokia, Microsoft, Codecademy, and Google. He is the author of acclaimed books including Visual Complexity: Mapping Patterns of Information (2011), The Book of Trees (2014), and The Book of Circles (2017).

#### ABSTRACT

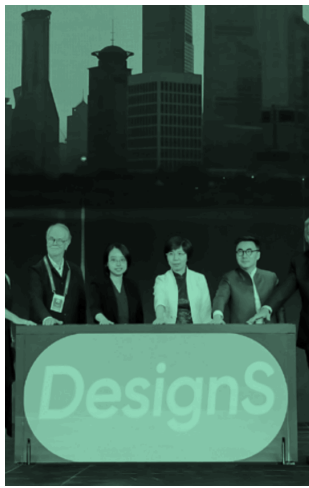
#### QUOTE

#### QUICK IMPRESSIONS

In the preface of The New Designer, Manuel Lima reflects on the ethical responsibilities of designers in today's world. He emphasizes that while it is easy to create shallow or purely aesthetic work, however meaningful design must go deeper, balancing functionality with awareness of its profound impact on people's lives. Lima argues that good design requires not only technical skill but also ethical consideration, psychological understanding, and strong human-centered thinking. To succeed, designers must cultivate soft skills, empathy, and the ability to see beyond objects to the experiences they create. Ultimately, he presents the designer not just as a producer of goods, but as a shaper of culture and human experience.

"I learned that design can be shallow at times, but it also can be a great force for good, able to improve the human condition with a singular solution."

*For me, this book feels like a friendly invitation to reflect on the impact of design and to explore ways of improving our work by being more ethical and empathetic in what we do.*



KEYWORDS

BIOGRAPHY

“DESIGNS: WORLD DESIGN CITIES  
SHANGHAI MANIFESTO”  
2025

VV.AA.

Design  
Urbanism  
Innovation  
Globalization  
Culture

Yongqi Lou, Don Norman, John Thackara, Yrjö Sotamaa,  
Rosanne Somerson, Lorenzo Imbesi, Ezio Manzini, Patrick  
Whitney, Dan Hill, Jin Ma

ABSTRACT

The DesignS: Shanghai Declaration 2024 suggests that design, in today’s unsettled world, is not only a tool for technology and economy but also a way of caring for both people and the planet. It calls for a shift from “human-centered” to “living-with-nature,” finding balance within the web of life. The declaration highlights collaboration across disciplines, the responsibility of a new generation of designers, and cities as spaces of learning and experimentation. Design is framed as a force of connection, repair, and hope—helping us imagine and build a fairer, more sustainable, and more vibrant future together.

QUOTE

QUICK  
IMPRESSIONS

*It highlights a new balance among human creativity, artificial intelligence, and the natural world. Humans contribute emotions, imagination, and values; AI offers powerful tools for knowledge and problem-solving; and nature provides the foundation of all life. Rethinking how these three interact is essential. What is needed is a new generation of designers—socially responsible, ecologically literate, skilled in AI and data, and equipped with critical thinking as well as business and management knowledge. At the same time, designers should honor cultural traditions and imagine new forms of living, especially those rooted in harmony with nature.*



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# CONSPIRATORIAL DESIGN 2025

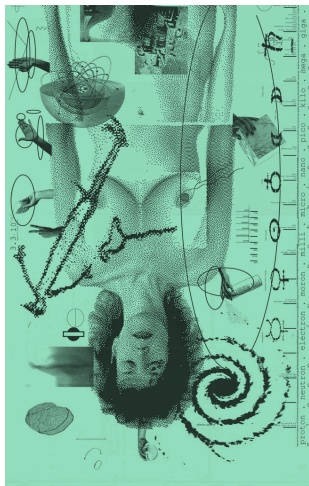
## CARLO BRAMANTI

Design  
Conspiracy  
Politics  
Critique  
Society

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS



## KEYWORDS

## BIOGRAPHY

# “POSTING AS PRACTICE” 2025

ELIZABETH GOODSPEED

Social Media  
Design  
Communication  
Practice  
Culture

Elizabeth Goodspeed is an independent designer, art director, and writer specializing in branding, packaging, and book and editorial design. She’s also the US editor-at-large for It’s Nice That and publishes Casual Archivist, a design history focused newsletter.

## ABSTRACT

This article, “Elizabeth Goodspeed on the rise of the designer as influencer,” critiques the modern expectation that creatives must transition from merely making work to continuously performing it publicly. Historically evolving from rational system-builders (such as Vignelli) to public-facing auteurs (like Sagmeister), the designer today must maintain a cohesive “personal brand,” turning their personality and body into a commercial asset. This visibility is driven by shrinking budgets, AI automation, and the need for non-client revenue (Patreon). However, this constant demand for self-exposure, which turns “personal disclosure” into “parasocial currency,” risks diverting energy from actual creative practice and ultimately “swallowing design itself”.

## QUOTE

“Today, making work is only half the job of a designer; performing it is the rest”.

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

*I think the article addresses urgent issues. For young designers it might seem obvious—even necessary—to critique social media exposure, yet in a feed increasingly shaped by algorithms rather than personal choice it’s easy to forget why and what we’re sharing. Adapting to new technologies can rightly expand visibility beyond “design bubbles,” but the structure of modern platforms pushes designers into a state where, as the author notes, “designers are no longer just making work; they are the work.” Today, “making work is only half the job of a designer; performing it is the rest.” Design becomes self-referential content, tailored to trends that satisfy a biased, non-neutral algorithm—content created to be consumed and forgotten in an endless chain that drains time and energy. The current digital age has taken the not-so-new “rockstar” tendency and turned it from an optional, boundary-pushing gesture into an economic and professional obligation: performance is now a requirement for survival, and platforms reward faces over fonts.*





# THE CANCELLED REPORT 2025

BRAD TROEMEL

## KEYWORDS

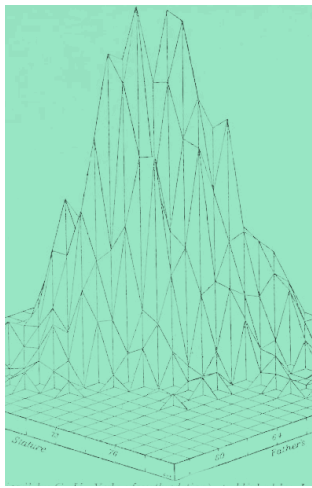
Internet Culture  
Cancellation  
Art  
Critique  
Society

## BIOGRAPHY

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS



# “A SANER AND RICHER CIVILIZATION” 2025

RJ ANDREWS

## KEYWORDS

Visualization  
Society  
Progress  
Design  
Knowledge

## BIOGRAPHY

## ABSTRACT

## QUOTE

## QUICK IMPRESSIONS

